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# Notes and Opinions.

**Is Biblical Literature the Revelation of God?** — The *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, in a recent notice of Goodspeed's *Israel's Messianic Hope*, has stated an antithesis that may very well be considered. "We get," the reviewer says, "an account of the interpretations, hopes, expectations, ideals of Israel as reflected in the literature of Israel, canonical and uncanonical, and not an account of the revelations of God recorded in his Word."

We call attention to this sentence at the risk of having our purpose misunderstood, since it would be difficult to draw a more striking antithesis, or to put more distinctly two conceptions of the proper use of the prophetic element of the Old Testament. On the one side are put the actual hopes of the Hebrew people as reflected in the prophetic and other literature, and over against these are put the "revelations of God recorded in his Word." Are these revelations, then, something different from the prophetic utterances? If so, what are they? Or, if they are not something different, are they the interpretations put upon those utterances by men of later times?

For ourselves we have been accustomed to hold that the literary material that goes to make up the Bible, when once understood in the light of the best possible information, is a veritable developing revelation of God. We should be loath to feel that it were anything else. Yet if our first interpretation of the antithesis above quoted is true, this revelation is something quite other than this literary material. The *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, however, is an unexpected quarter in which to find such a teaching, and we are therefore compelled to believe that our second interpretation is correct, and that the *Review's* opinion is to the effect that one must interpret messianic prophecy backward rather than historically. This may make satisfactory theology, but is it not a somewhat delicate position for a modern exegete to hold?

It is interesting in this connection to compare the following sentences taken from a review of Purves' *Apostolic Age* in the same journal, written by Professor Zenos:

Unless we have misunderstood him, Dr. Purves holds that the supernatural must emerge in a preternatural manner, if it is to be recognized as

such. We think this is not necessary. A supernatural force, factor, or person may make itself or himself manifest in and through the natural order of the world. To hold that much of what appears miraculous in the Scriptures is a manifestation of the supernatural in natural forms is not to surrender the belief in the supernatural or desupernaturalize Christianity.

To our minds this is an instance of delightfully clear thinking.

**Genesis in the Sunday School.**— The *Outlook* of July 27, 1901, has an exceedingly sensible editorial upon "The Study of Genesis," from which we venture to quote a few sentences:

> If the teacher is persuaded that the book of Genesis is wholly historical from beginning to end, that the world is only six or eight thousand years old, that the first man was an instantaneous creation, that the deluge overspread the whole globe, that the patriarchs lived for centuries, we should advise him not to spend time in impressing this view of the historical accuracy of the narrative upon his pupils. If, on the other hand, he thinks, as we do, that man has been evolved from a lower animal order, that the story of the creation and fall of man is an ancient legend adapted by a spiritual prophet to spiritual ends, that the deluge was a local convulsion, though of great proportions, and that the longevity of the patriarchs was not materially if any greater than that attained by men of our own epoch, we should still advise him not to take any time to impress this view of the book upon his class.

This advice is intended for the teacher of the ordinary Sunday-school class, and is admirable. Common-sense is a very desirable quality just now in biblical teaching, and especially needed in teaching the Sunday-school lessons set by the International Committee.

And this leads one to remark that nothing will show the tendencies in biblical thought better than a comparison of the comments upon the Genesis stories printed in various lesson helps, notably the *Pilgrim* series, with those made when Genesis was last the subject of the International system. If these comparisons show anything, it is that the makers of Sunday-school exegesis are coming to distinguish between literalism and religious teaching.

**Professor Wright's Discoveries as Viewed by "Science."**— In its issue of June 21, 1901, *Science* has a rather lengthy discussion of the article of Dr. Frederick G. Wright in *McClure's Magazine* for June upon "Geology and the Deluge." Readers of *McClure's* and various other publications will recall that Professor Wright claims to have discovered evidences of a deluge in Mongolia and of a great sea around Mount Ararat. We do not pretend to possess Professor Wright's geological or even harmonistic abilities, but should be heartily glad if his

discoveries were to prove reliable; yet a reading of the criticism in *Science* suggests caution in accepting all his conclusions. Discoverers occasionally have shown a weakness for mistaking islands for continents, and there seems to be a bare possibility that Professor Wright's enthusiastic devotion to the harmonizing of Genesis and geology has led him to mistake the work of wind for the work of water, to overlook certain fossil deposits which Sir Archibald Geikie mentions, and to neglect to mention the absence of marine fossils where his theory would apparently demand them. He is charged also with having uttered dark sayings concerning a catastrophe that overtook paleolithic men. *Science* even wonders "how far respect for the Scriptures is fostered by 'remarkable discoveries' of this sort and by the much-trumpeted stage-play that preceded and accompanied them." Thus we are again left suspended between faith and science, to wait with patience the final word of geology. When it is spoken, may it be intelligible! For the layman there are still exegetical difficulties in making faith in the Scriptures wait upon discussions of paleolithic man and Asiatic loess.